

VZCZCXRO5323
RR RUEHAST RUEHDBU
DE RUEHTA #1528/01 1560602
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 050602Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9670
INFO RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1754
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 8015
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 7924
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 7169
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 2146
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1412
RUEHAST/USOFFICE ALMATY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2216

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ASTANA 001528

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: ALMATY NOTES, MAY 2007

REF: A. Astana 1033, B. Astana 1415, C. Astana 1129

¶1. The "Almaty Notes" series is intended to maintain focus on developments in civil society, the media, and the opposition in Kazakhstan's "southern capital" following the move of the Embassy to Astana.

Opposition Challenges Formation of Election Commissions

¶2. Three opposition parties, True Ak Zhol, the Social Democratic Party, and the Communists, filed a lawsuit against the Almaty City Maslikhat challenging the way the city precinct election commissions were formed. In early April during by-elections for Almaty City precinct election commissions, the three opposition parties won only 20 of the 821 vacant seats (Ref A). The opposition leaders stated that the selection process was a farce designed to make the election process non-transparent. The hearing began on May 8 in the Bostandyk district court but was quickly adjourned. When it resumed on May 11, more than a dozen policemen were present; some of them urged the elderly opposition activists there to observe the trial to disperse. True Ak Zhol activist Marzhan Aspandiyarova nevertheless gave interviews to journalists standing at the entrance of the court building. The event ended peacefully.

¶3. On May 10, the Almaty City Maslikhat invited representatives of various political parties, including the opposition, to a round table meeting to discuss the formation of election commissions. The round table was organized to discuss controversial aspects of the formation, because the current legislation does not provide a detailed procedure. Following the discussion, the participants signed a memorandum on cooperation. The participants from the opposition True Ak Zhol and Social Democratic parties insisted that their opinions, which differed from the opinions of others, be included in the memorandum. The opposition representatives insisted on transparency of lists of nominees for election commission seats and spoke against "file" voting, meaning voting for the list of candidates rather than individuals. (Panorama weekly, May 11)

Conference on Local Election Observation

¶4. An international conference on the Further Development of Local Election Observation in Kazakhstan, was held in Almaty on May 14. The participants stressed that the monitoring of election procedures should be conducted long before the day when an election is held. The secretary of the Central Election Commission (CEC), Bakhyt Maldashev, spoke in favor of close cooperation of the CEC with local observers. The conference was organized by OSCE Almaty and the Republican Network of Independent Observers. (AC TV, May 14)

True Ak Zhol and Social Democrats Form Electoral Bloc

¶5. On May 23 two opposition parties, True Ak Zhol and the Social Democrats, announced their intention to set up an electoral bloc. They stated that they assume that following the recent constitutional amendments, the authorities will dissolve parliament and conduct early elections this fall.

Protests against Constitutional Amendments

¶6. On May 24, a group of 30 people, including opposition journalist Sergey Duvanov, went to the central square of Almaty to protest the recent constitutional amendments. Duvanov alone was detained and spent several hours in a police station. The next day the City Special Inter-District Administrative Court tried Duvanov for organizing an unsanctioned rally. He admitted the violation but stated that the law restricting freedom of speech was not in line with the International Convention on Civic and Political Rights signed by Kazakhstan. Duvanov was fined 18,564 tenge (\$152). About a dozen of opposition activists and journalists attended the trial to support Duvanov.

¶7. In a June 1 article in the Respublika weekly, Duvanov expressed his disappointment with the opposition parties that had failed to support his protest action. Duvanov wrote: "There could be a good reason. The constitution was re-written and the president has been made president for life. It does not happen every year. However, the opposition parties limited themselves to making traditional statements. Lately, the opposition has preferred to just do paperwork against the regime."

¶8. On May 29, journalist Yekaterina Belyayeva of the "Vzglyad"

ASTANA 00001528 002 OF 003

weekly went to the Monument of Independence on the Almaty central square with a poster reading "Constitutional Amendments - the Road to Totalitarianism." After thirty minutes the police arrested her and took her to a district police station, where she was detained for three hours.

¶9. On May 30, political scientist Galym Agileuov went to the same central square to protest the amendments. He was wearing a cardboard crown on his head. After fifteen minutes, the police arrested Agileuov and two of his colleagues. (Vremya daily, June 2)

Follow-up to Nurbank Incident

¶10. On May 10 the police in Almaty detained two employees of KTK TV channel, Ivan Likhovuzov and Vitaliy Piskunov, an officer of the Presidential Guard, major Nurlan Sarypbekov, and the Nurbank's security chief, Yerlan Sarsenbekov, as witnesses in connection with a case of the Nurbank former deputy chairman, Zholdas Timraliyev (Ref B). Timraliyev disappeared on January 31. According to Interior Ministry press secretary Bagdat Kozhakhmetov, the Almaty police have launched a criminal investigation into the case. Major Nurlan Sarypbekov was arrested as a suspect involved in the abducting of Timraliyev. Piskunov was placed under arrest as a suspect involved in a fraud. Other witnesses were questioned and set free. (Vremya daily, May 16)

¶11. On May 15, the Medeu district court in Almaty continued the hearing of the criminal case against Abilmazhin Gilimov and six officers of Almaty police special squad who were charged with organizing and participating in the January 31 attack on the Nurbank office in Almaty. The officers filed a motion asking the court to transfer Gilimov from the Almaty City detention center to the detention center of the National Security Committee because his life was allegedly in danger. The judge approved the motion. Then the court continued questioning witnesses. (Vremya daily, May 16)

Businessmen Lambast Aliyev

¶12. A group of well-known businessmen, including leading bankers Mukhtar Ablyazov and Nurzhan Subkhanberdin, made a statement on May 30 lambasting Rakhat Aliyev. In their statement the businessmen reported that they themselves had experienced Rakhat Aliyev's way of doing business and the political pressure that he exerted for personal purposes with the help of law enforcement bodies. "Today any of us might find himself in the place of the kidnapped bank managers. We are concerned that Aliyev and his accomplices can resort to any provocations against people and stability in the society. We are calling on progressive forces to support the president's efforts and to preserve the stability" the statement read. (Vremya daily, May 30)

¶13. A group of associations representing medium-size businesses made a separate statement blaming Rakhat Aliyev for seizing their businesses in the past. According to the statement, "many have fallen victims to Rakhat Aliyev and his henchmen including the ones from law enforcement. He is to blame for ruined lives and projects that have not been realized." The businessmen have called on everyone to support the president's efforts to root out corruption and "raids" on other people's property. (Vremya daily, May 31)

Calls to Reinvestigate Nurkadilov, Sarsenbayev Murders

¶14. In a May 29 statement on Rakhat Aliyev, the True Ak Zhol party demanded that the tragic deaths of politicians Zamanbek Nurkadilov and Altynbek Sarsenbayev and his driver and bodyguard be re-investigated in light of press reports about Aliyev's involvement in these cases. (Vremya daily, May 30)

Police Continue to Search for Missing Journalist

¶15. The police continue to search for missing journalist, Oralgaysha Zhabagtaykyzy (Ref C), the Interior Ministry press secretary told a press briefing in Almaty on May 14. "The investigation does not exclude any of the versions, including the one, which assumed that her disappearance was linked to her professional activities," the press secretary said. (Interfax, May 14)

Almaty Crisis Center Left without Shelter

ASTANA 00001528 003 OF 003

¶16. The "Podrugi" (Girlfriends) crisis center in Almaty is looking for new premises, because their old shelter, which could hold 16 women, had been demolished. According to the executive director of the center, Yelena Karsten, the amount they were paid for the old facility is sufficient to buy only a four-room apartment, which can hold a maximum of eight women. (Vremya daily, May 16)

MILAS